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the educational job ahead

as co-op leaders see it



PA-165

Summary of talks, discussions, and reports
of the Conference on the Electrification Ad-
viser Programs, held in Washington, D. C.,
December 4-7, 1950

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I. ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

In setting up this first Conference on the Electrification Adviser Program, REA Administrator Claude R. Wickard stated its purpose as follows:

"An informed and loyal membership is your co-op's greatest asset. It is a valuable aid to efficient management and it is the key to getting and keeping wholehearted community support for the co-op...Drawing on the combined thinking and experience of the co-op leadership represented here, we may expect to obtain from these discussions: (1) a clearer plan of what rural electric co-ops need in order to do the educational job, and (2) practical suggestions on how to go about the task in the months and years ahead."

To examine the needs of rural electric co-ops for an education program of power use

and co-op information for members and of improved community relations, 89 co-op leaders from 34 states met in Washington, December 4-7. They were managers of statewide associations, editors of statewide papers, and chairmen of statewide power use and member education committees, as well as directors and managers of their own local co-ops. They knew their own local problems from years of experience, and they came eager to exchange ideas and to offer suggestions which would be practical for any rural electric co-op.

The four-day program opened with introductory remarks by Administrator Wickard on the "Importance of a Vigorous Co-op Education Program Now." This was followed by a panel presentation, "What Is the Job Ahead?" Panel talks were made by Obed Wyum, R.S.R. Electric Cooperative, Inc., Milnor, North Dakota;

Mrs. Andrew Dahl, Sheridan County Electric Cooperative, Inc., Medicine Lake, Montana; L. T. Moss, Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Inc., Vinita, Oklahoma; and T. H. Hafer, Corn Belt Electric Cooperative, Inc., Bloomington, Illinois. A general discussion followed. A highlight of the morning session was a talk on "The Membership Is the Co-op", by Jerry Voorhis, Executive Secretary of The Cooperative League of the U. S. A.

Dr. Knox T. Hutchinson, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, opened the afternoon's session of the Conference with a talk on "Reaching New Horizons on the Farm through the Use of Electricity". Then came a panel presentation, "What Are Today's Problems that Education Must Meet?" Four major problems were outlined by REA staff members and then discussed by the delegates: "The Threat to Continued Ownership by Farmers", "The Farmer's Stake in America's Power Sources", "Good Management and Relations with Other Groups", and "Getting Phone Service for Farmers".

The second day of the Conference was given over largely to working sessions with all participants divided into five groups: "Getting the Program Started", "Planning and Conducting the Program", "Selecting and Training Personnel", "Measuring Results", and "Gaining Cooperation of Other Groups and Agencies".

Each working group elected its own secretary and chairman. After meeting a second time on the third morning of the Conference, the groups reported their suggestions and recommendations. These reports were then discussed in full session by all Conference participants.

Other highlights of the second day's proceedings included two talks by representatives of the Extension Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. J. L. Boatman, Chief, Division of Subject Matter, discussed "Extension's Interest in the Electrification Adviser Program" and Cannon C. Hearne, Head, Personnel Training Section, discussed "Adult Education Problems and Methods". Two talks

on "Problems Confronting Me as an Electrification Adviser" by electrification advisers from Mississippi and Nebraska, and a feature talk by Clyde T. Ellis, Executive Manager, NRECA, about "Importance of Member Education in the job of Electrifying Rural America", rounded out the schedule.

An evening session on the second day took up the problems of allocations, materials shortages, and the defense program. H. B. McCoy, Assistant Administrator, Industry Operations, National Production Authority, presented the latest developments and answered questions about how regulatory measures would affect rural electrification.

Further information on what to expect in the critical period ahead was developed during the third day when co-op leaders had an opportunity to talk with D. L. Marlett, Acting Administrator for Electric Power, Defense Power Administration, U. S. Department of Interior.

The final day of the crowded schedule considered "How Can We Translate the Conference Suggestions into Action?" Three group reports were prepared. Recommendations of the group of co-op directors and managers represented at the meeting were presented by William M. Roberts, Pickwick Electric Membership Corporation, Selmer, Tennessee. Reporting for the statewide managers was A. D. Mueller, Indiana Statewide Rural Electric Co-op, Inc. Ed. H. Thomas, Arkansas REA News, gave the report of the editors. Richard Hausler, of NRECA, summarized the work of the Conference just before its close.

From these talks, discussions, and reports representative ideas have been extracted and compiled in this publication. This is done in compliance with a resolution of the Conference, unanimously adopted by its 89 participants, asking that the results of the pooled thinking of this representative working group be sent to each director and manager of all electric co-ops. It is their hope and the hope of REA that this material will help you to meet the problems and needs of your own co-op.



II. DO THESE PROBLEMS FACE YOUR CO-OP?

Here are some of the problems which co-op leaders brought to the Conference. Many of them are common to a large number of co-ops. You may be able, therefore, to use some of the answers and solutions which other co-ops have tried and found helpful.

1. *How can the co-op's education program be organized and conducted so that the most help will be given to members in connection*

with their problems on how to use their electricity and their electrical equipment?

Conference discussion brought out that the use of electricity and electrical equipment is new to most farms. The farmer and his family are no different from anyone else who gets and tries to use a new tool for the first time. Many mistakes are made. The best

handling is not understood. Much power is wasted. Benefits are small by comparison with what they could be in the hands of experienced, skilled operators. Electricity and equipment may even be condemned because their use does not bring the anticipated results. The rate of increase in the use of electricity may therefore be slow, and electricity may remain a convenience rather than become a profitable "tool".

Most help will come from a definite program, planned, organized, and executed under the direction of one or more highly qualified electrification advisers, backed by the manager and board of directors, and using all available assistance from members and other persons in the area.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 9, 10, 14, 23, 25b.)

2. How can the program contribute most to the National Emergency?

Each co-op needs at least one highly qualified electrification adviser doing full-time educational work with members on productive uses of electricity.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 2, 6, 13, 15, 19.)

3. Does this program assure enough revenue to insure the financial stability of the co-op as an organization?

The beneficial uses of electricity by farmers are so numerous that eventually all rural lines should have ample revenue. However, left to their own devices, it may be two or three generations before farmers are making full use of the power available to them. A good program by the co-op will greatly speed up the process and assure ample revenue to the co-op much quicker than would otherwise be the case.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 1, 2.)

4. Not enough people understand the REA co-op program, its aims and purposes.

The result is indifference by the members instead of loyal participation, misunderstanding and griping instead of cooperation with management, unwise decisions instead of intelligent action. Participants at the Conference cited instance after instance where such an unfortunate condition had been remedied by adopting a well-balanced educational program for employees and members. It was pointed out that managers and directors, too, can often profit by a better understanding and stronger appreciation of the importance and value of a member education program.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 13, 16, 19, 21, 23-25, 39, 40.)

5. How to convince members that the co-op belongs to them, and to make them realize the benefits that go with this ownership and also to get them to assume the responsibilities of ownership?

It was pointed out that people usually take good care of their own property, so that it is important for management to help each member realize that he is a part owner of the co-op. The understanding of the capital credits plan by the members is recognized as one important step in making clear the benefits of member ownership in an REA electric co-op. It must be accompanied by an educational program to acquaint members with their benefits and responsibilities.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 9, 20, 23d-f, 24, 25d, 26.)

6. How to avoid the danger of a sell-out?

When co-ops fail to do anything about Problems 4 and 5 above, they may expect to be threatened with sell-outs and consequent loss of a valuable business, of control over their rates, and of area-wide service. In a co-op which has maintained an adequate program of member information and participation thinking would run something like this: "If this distribution system is good enough for the power company to buy, it's good enough

for us members to hang on to". One participant at the Conference pointed out that no sell-out threat has yet developed where members have had the facts about their co-op business.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 8, 13-15, 20, 21, 23-26, 41.)

7. Where can we get help in setting up or strengthening our power use and member education program?

Reports show that a great many managers and directors see the values which come from a good education program, but that there is not enough clarity about what aids can be obtained to make the co-op's effort in power use, co-op understanding, and member relations more effective. Among those agencies listed during the Conference sessions are: the Statewide Power Use and Member Education Committee, services of NRECA, The Cooperative League of the U.S.A., local councils or associations of various types of co-ops, local and regional offices of farm organizations, state agricultural colleges, Extension Service, and REA. The Conference proceedings showed the increasing ability of co-op leaders to cope with their own educational problems instead of depending too heavily upon outside aid and advice.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Item 7.)

8. What kind of member education work can a co-op do before an electrification adviser is employed?

Co-op leaders at the Conference placed heavy and repeated emphasis upon the need for at least one full-time employee in power use, member education, and community relations work (whether designated as electrification adviser, agricultural engineer, home economist, or by some other title). There was general realization, however, that for some of the smaller electric co-ops hiring a full-time electrification adviser was difficult. For these, and for the stronger co-ops, too, volunteer work by committees of members was strongly urged to carry on ac-

tivities designed to promote the most efficient use of co-op power, to familiarize members with the REA story and the principles of cooperation, and to secure community understanding and acceptance for the co-op. It was pointed out that every co-op should provide all members with copies of the co-op's bylaws, the REA booklet "A Guide for Members", and with available wiring and power use leaflets.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Item 10.)

9. Is there any way to measure the results we are getting from our educational program?

The answer is "yes".

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 34-36.)

10. How to get adequate training of personnel who do educational, promotional, and public relations work?

"This training of employees", stated one Conference report, "is the responsibility of the individual co-op, but the statewide associations should set up and maintain training schools and other assistance."

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 11a, 21, 30-33.)

11. Is there some way by which we can bring the women of our co-op into more active participation?

In the face of the national emergency the necessity for greater participation of women in the affairs of the co-ops is generally recognized. Several reports at the Conference pointed out exceptionally fine power use and member education programs which some co-ops had built around the volunteer services of mothers, wives, and daughters on the lines. A first step recommended for co-ops which have not already done so, is encouragement of joint membership for husband and wife.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 10j, 15, 16, 38h.)

12. *How to interest and inform our children about the co-op?*

Co-op leaders who are looking ahead expressed some concern over what will become of the co-op systems they built with so much struggle and effort if the present generation does not tell to our young people the story of the co-ops and prepare them for membership and ownership.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 16, 19, 38f, 38g.)

13. *What are some of the ways by which co-ops can enlist community support and the aid of specific groups?*

"Cooperation is a two-way street," said one group report drawn up at the Conference. And Clyde Ellis advised in his speech: "We cannot expect help from other groups when we need it unless we help those other groups when they need us". During one of the discussion periods co-op leaders were asked to list all organizations and groups into three categories: (1) those friendly to the co-op, (2) those indifferent, and (3) those antagonistic. When asked to explain the lack of interest or opposition of groups in the last two categories, there was admission that real efforts had not been made to fully inform them of the story of REA or the objectives and achievements of the co-op. A weak education program was responsible in most instances for poor community acceptance of the co-op.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Item 38.)

14. *How to get help from the appliance dealers?*

This is similar to Problem 13 above.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 22, 38c.)

15. *How to assure the public (and members, too) that co-ops conform to fair labor standards and pay prevailing wages?*

Very substantial support for the REA program has come from organized labor. It is important that the co-op's program include data on co-op policy and practice toward its employees.

(For ideas see Part III, especially Item 38k.)

16. *What is the best way to combat the propaganda attacks of NTEA and other opposition groups?*

Make sure that your co-op house is in good order. False charges that co-ops are socialistic, tax-dodging, unfair to labor, etc., make little headway in the service areas of co-ops which maintain good community relations and in which the manager and board keep members fully informed about the co-op's operations and activities. The report of the editors' group emphasized the importance of local newsletters and statewide publications, which have a combined circulation reaching nearly 3 million rural families. "This is a powerful voice which the co-ops themselves control," advised the report. And Jerry Voorhis, speaking to the Conference participants, pointed out that "Three million members of rural electric co-ops can do anything they really want to do in combatting the dollars of NTEA, providing they know what the story of their co-op is."

(For ideas see Part III, especially Items 39-41.)

17. *How to get people to understand that the G & T (generating and transmission) program is nation-wide in scope and that its benefits, direct or indirect, go to the individual member wherever he lives?*

"There is a great need," said Administrator Wickard, "for a better understanding of the facts." If co-op members themselves are not informed of the way in which G & T loans have provided them with electricity and kept down rates even in areas where loans are not actually made, we can hardly expect other people to judge the program fairly.



III. CAN YOUR CO-OP USE THESE IDEAS?

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

Objectives of an adequate power use and member education program were set forth by co-op leaders at the Conference as follows:

- a. To establish cooperative understanding among the members, co-op employees, and directors;
- b. To promote efficient use of electricity;
- c. To secure public understanding and support;
- d. To counter opposition to co-ops and to the REA program.

These objectives are interdependent and based on recognition of the fact that the purpose of the co-op is service to its members.

Five working groups at the Conference listed their recommendations for attaining these objectives. Their suggestions, together with

ideas proposed during talks and general discussion, are presented here.

GETTING THE PROGRAM STARTED

1. Managers and directors of non-participating co-ops should visit co-ops having an active program if they are not convinced of the value of power use and co-op information for members.

2. Statewide orientation conferences and "directors' day" meetings provide an opportunity to hear other managers and directors as well as members of other co-ops tell what a good power use and co-op information program has done for them.

3. REA should fully explain the details of the feasibility study after the announcement of loan approval, in order that co-op boards may be convinced of the necessity for increasing kwh consumption through an active power use program.

4. REA should be expected (and was asked) to furnish all co-ops with up-to-date information on available publications and other educational aids.

5. Rural Electrification Magazine (the NRECA publication) should be expected (and was asked) to publish more feature stories on electrification advisers, discuss their problems and solutions used, and illustrate results accomplished.

6. In each state there should be an association of co-ops, with a paid manager, to exchange ideas among co-ops, to coordinate local educational programs, and to work closely with the co-ops in serving their needs with power use committees and statewide publications.

7. Extension Service, agricultural colleges, farm organizations, other co-ops, and other agencies and community leaders interested in agriculture and rural electrification can offer useful aid in setting up a power use and member education program.

8. In no case should a member education program be postponed; the weaker the co-op, the more this program is needed.

9. New members are often more receptive to an information program than old members who already have the electric power service they wanted.

10. At least one full-time electrification adviser should be hired by every co-op, but even before this the following minimum program can be started:

- a. Select a committee of members to further power use and co-op education.
- b. Enlist the aid of the County Agent and representatives of other agricultural agencies.
- c. Contact appliance dealers to put on demonstrations.
- d. Encourage employees to join civic clubs

in order to promote better community understanding of the co-op.

e. Promote courtesy by employees and inform employees through staff meetings.

f. Improve appearance of the headquarters office.

g. Use REA leaflets.

h. Give copy of bylaws to each member so he knows his rights and responsibilities as a joint owner of the co-op.

i. Subscribe to Statewide paper (if there is one) for the co-op's members.

j. Urge joint membership of man and wife in order to secure participation of women in the co-op's activities.

11. After an electrification adviser is hired, the manager can help him (or her) get support and cooperation from other employees by the following methods:

a. At periodic staff meetings, emphasize the value of the member education program. Give the electrification adviser time at some of these meetings.

b. Impress upon other employees that the electrification adviser is a specialist in his field with an around-the-clock job that does not compress into an 8 to 4:30 schedule.

c. Tie other employees into the power use program and let them occasionally work with the electrification adviser in tackling special problems. Send other employees to assist on evening activities so they will appreciate the irregular schedule.

PLANNING THE PROGRAM

12. Careful and detailed planning is needed for carrying out the objectives of the program and for using program techniques effectively.

13. Set up a co-op power use and member education committee made up of representative members, selected directors, the co-op's manager, and the electrification adviser. Also name an advisory group of representatives from agricultural agencies and other interested organizations to work with the power use and member education committee.

14. Determine needs of members by surveys, community meetings, personal contacts with members, newsletter questionnaires, statistical information, and experience of the power use and member education committee and of the advisory group (see Item 13 above). An analysis of these needs furnishes the foundation for a sound program.

15. Some co-ops have obtained excellent results in securing neighborhood leaders, both men and women, to serve as "minute men" in carrying on member education and community relations activities

16. Aim to reach the entire family. This will require special projects to interest women and children. Cooperation with women's organizations and youth groups is necessary.

17. Planning should involve periodic evaluation of procedures and a review of progress by the board.

CONDUCTING THE PROGRAM

18. Conducting the program is simply a matter of putting into effect certain activities and techniques in order to achieve the objectives decided upon.

19. Work closely and in harmony with women's groups, civic clubs, youth organizations, agricultural associations, and other community groups. Some of these have shown a willingness on a local level to sponsor demonstrations of the uses of co-op electricity, to hold joint meetings for recreation and co-op or power use information, to exchange facilities, and to give common sponsorship for worthwhile community activities and projects.

20. Use democratic procedures at all times, as this is in itself part of education in cooperative principles as well as in accordance with good citizenship. Co-op leaders at the Conference testified in some detail to the dangers of dictatorial management arising out of a situation where directors or managers are so satisfied with the job they are doing in running a utility operation that they forget it belongs to the members and that they owe their own positions to the members. They could, in fact, do a much better job by encouraging member participation and responsibility.

21. Provide regular and continuing training for all employees of the co-op so that they will understand how cooperative business differs from ordinary commercial business. Experience has shown that employees who have never had a chance to learn the rural electrification story offer little loyalty to their job and sometimes even turn members against their own co-op.

22. Dealer participation has a definite part in the power use program. Cooperative dealers can make substantial contributions in displays for annual meetings, neighborhood demonstrations of appliances and equipment, and the development of community goodwill.

23. A wide variety of methods and techniques have been developed and tested by co-ops in carrying on effective programs of power use, co-op information, and community relations. Commercial power companies have, of course, long made use of many of them in promoting their own customer goodwill and public acceptance.

Some of these educational tools were listed in the reports of the working groups at the Conference:

- a. Booklets, pamphlets, and leaflets published by REA. Outstanding is the educational handbook for rural electric co-ops, "Telling the Co-op Story", but a wide range of published aids can be obtained (from Information Services Division of REA

in Washington, D. C.) on how to use electricity to boost farm income, to replace dwindling manpower, to increase production, and to make the rural home more comfortable; how to apply cooperative principles and obtain member participation; and how to build firm public relations and make the co-op a vital part of the community.

b. Pamphlets published by NRECA, by statewide associations, and by various local co-ops. (Many of these can be obtained by writing to the NRECA office in Washington or to your own statewide association.)

c. Pamphlets published by the Extension Service, Farm Credit Administration, other Federal or State agencies, by agricultural colleges, by the Cooperative League of the U.S.A., and by the electric power industry and large manufacturers of electrical appliances.

d. Your own co-op's bylaws. It is essential to mail this to each member so that he may know his rights and his responsibilities as a member and joint owner of the co-op. Many co-ops include the bylaws in a booklet or packet of information about the co-op which is given to each new member. One speaker at the Conference described how much easier it was to secure cooperation from new members than from some of the old members who now take their electricity pretty much for granted.

e. Regular reports on the co-op's operations and on the actions of board and manager, presented in terms that the members can readily understand. Since broad policy in a co-op is set by the members, they must have accurate and complete information if their decisions are to be wise ones and in the best interests of the organization.

f. A newsletter is the most practical way of keeping members informed about the business they own, and it is used by hundreds of co-ops to give members power use in-formation, to increase their knowledge of cooperative principles of doing business, to strengthen their loyalty, and to encourage their assistance and participation in lightening the tasks of management.

g. The statewide paper or magazine gives the local co-ops a big circulation for telling their story. Most statewide publications have sufficient resources to hire experienced writers and are well equipped to handle news and features about rural electrification from a broad viewpoint.

h. Posters, charts, displays and exhibits. Use these in the windows and office of the headquarters building, rotating them frequently so that no one has a chance to get tired of them. Use them at fairs and at the annual meeting. Elaborate exhibits can be expensive to prepare; so in some states the co-ops trade exhibits with one another after they have served their original purpose. A system of exchanges can be arranged by your statewide association that expands your program and stretches your budget.

i. Slides and movies are particularly effective in demonstrating the use of appliances and electrical equipment, wiring, safety, and related subjects.

j. The local press will in most cases carry news and feature stories about rural electrification and your co-op's activities to your members and to non-members, too, in nearby areas.

k. Your local radio station serves a similar function by carrying spot announcements or prepared programs. Several statewide associations report highly satisfactory results from series of programs broadcast over area networks in the interests of the co-ops which form the statewide organization.

l. Demonstrations are a principal tool in the electrification adviser's kit of techniques. Demonstrations can be most

effectively used to introduce proper care and use of home appliances and farm equipment, safe wiring, and new techniques for using co-op electricity more effectively. A good electrification adviser or a good power use committee of members can use demonstrations on the farm, in the home, in neighborhood meetings and at an annual meeting or county fair.

m. Quiz contests, games, competition in adapting farm and household equipment to electricity, essay and slogan contests -- these are other "gimmicks" which have been found useful in securing member participation, in giving meetings a shot in the arm, and in making it easy for members to understand effective power use and the value of co-op membership.

24. The annual meeting is generally regarded by co-ops as the outstanding single opportunity to inform the members about power use, cooperative principles and practices, and the actual operations of their own co-op. Many co-ops have achieved annual meetings which are the outstanding events of the year for the headquarters town or county, and in this way the annual meeting serves to tell the co-op story to hundreds and even thousands of people outside the membership. It must be remembered, though, that the annual meeting is only a part of an integrated educational program, and that educational activities must be scheduled throughout the entire year.

25. Your educational program will use a variety of other meetings in addition to the big annual event:

a. District meetings. Some of those larger co-ops which have provided in their by-laws for districting use the annual district meetings not only for the required official business but also as an educational feature and an opportunity for members to really become acquainted with how their co-op works. Several co-op leaders at the Conference gave enthusiastic reports of discussion groups which

had tackled various problems of the co-op at district meetings.

b. Community and neighborhood meetings. A co-op with a good power use and member education program can keep a series of small neighborhood meetings going throughout the year. These may be freezer or range demonstrations for five or six neighboring homemakers, or they may be more formal series of "school" meetings on motor maintenance, household and farm-yard electrical repairs, etc. These are opportunities not only to stress power use topics but also to answer questions about how a co-op functions and the significance of co-op membership.

c. Another type of meeting is that sponsored by some other organization, such as the local Grange, Farm Bureau, Farmer's Union, or other farmers' group. Such meetings are helpful in encouraging the co-op's participation in community activities and in considering community problems which the electric co-op can help solve.

d. Board meetings can be educational. A director who attended the Conference described a novel experiment which his co-op finds successful. The board invites a few selected members (both husbands and wives) to each meeting of the board. The invitation is quite formal and the meeting is made a special occasion. In time this creates a core of members who understand problems which the board faces and who develop enough interest and knowledge of the conduct of the co-op's affairs to influence other members and solidify loyalty to the co-op.

26. Guided tours of the co-op's facilities develop a member's awareness of his ownership, of his stake in the co-op.

27. With a little advance planning, visits to the homes of members by the lineman on repair jobs as well as by the electrification adviser can be informative and can be used to cement member relations with management.

SELECTING AND TRAINING PERSONNEL

28. In selecting an electrification adviser, the following qualifications are essential:

- a. Like people and be able to get along with them.
- b. Have character and be loyal.
- c. Know farm people and farm life.
- d. Want to be helpful to others.
- e. Not be afraid of hard work and long irregular hours.
- f. Have practical knowledge of electricity, cooperative principles, and techniques of education and public relations.

29. Formal education and experience are recognized as very desirable. But co-op leaders recommended at the Conference that a co-op's inability to find a qualified person with such a background not be used as an excuse for not hiring anyone even though otherwise qualified persons are available.

30. Acquiring additional training should be considered an integral part of the electrification adviser's job. This supplementary training and education was described at the Conference as a continuing process rather than a one-time effort. An electrification adviser must be willing to keep up to date on new developments in the field of power use and co-op information and techniques for reaching the members and the general public.

31. In-service training is primarily the responsibility and obligation of the individual co-op, although the statewide association and REA, as well as other agencies, will aid in setting up training schools and providing educational materials.

32. It is recommended that all employees of the co-op help the electrification adviser to acquire a thorough understanding of all the co-op's functions and activities.

33. Arrangements can often be worked out to get the assistance of personnel from other rural electric co-ops in training a new electrification adviser.

MEASURING RESULTS

34. Regular reports to the manager and through him to the board should be required from the electrification adviser. The power use and member education committee should report to the board on a regular basis.

35. Periodic appraisal of the progress of the co-op's information and education program in terms of the objectives should be made. If at any time it is found that the program fails to measure up to expectations, then the application of the techniques used should be examined in order to determine what improvements can be made.

36. A number of things can serve as yardsticks for measuring results of the program:

- a. Attendance at meetings (annual, district, neighborhood) and active participation by the members.
- b. Reduction in number of complaints.
- c. Elimination of derogatory comparison with power company service.
- d. An increase in requests for information on power use.
- e. Reduction in minimum bills and idle services; increased rate of kwh consumption, and better distribution of load over 24-hour period.
- f. Increased participation of committees and board in activities.
- g. Increased participation by employees.
- h. Cooperation of members during emergencies.
- i. Increased member understanding of co-op principles and aims.

- j. Increased acceptance by independent press and radio.
- k. Increased evidence of better relations with individuals, civic groups, dealers, and farm organizations.
- l. More favorable findings in surveys and personal contacts with members.

GAINING COOPERATION OF OTHER GROUPS AND AGENCIES

37. Since no persons, groups, or agencies can be expected to accept and support the rural electric co-ops unless they understand what these cooperatives are and how they operate and with what effect on the community, it is regarded as of primary importance by co-op leaders that full information be supplied to them by all practical means.

38. The following are some of the groups and agencies named by co-op leaders at the Conference for special attention in the co-op's program of community relations:

- a. Agricultural Extension Service. Officials of Extension Service have on many occasions offered the full cooperation of their staff on national, state, and county levels. The co-ops should avail themselves of these services. The report of one working group at the Conference expressed the hope that REA personnel will assist in all practicable ways in work which Extension Service men and women are doing for the improvement of agricultural and rural life. Relations should be established with this service at state and local levels; joint programs of action should be worked out; assistance in training electrification advisers should be solicited; recognition should be given to the contribution of these Extension Service workers.
- b. Service clubs and civic associations. The co-op should keep these groups informed as to its program and activities, and offer assistance in community proj-

ects, especially those which will bring about improvement of living conditions or which involve in any way the use of electricity (such as the development of rural industries). Whether or not the co-op should be represented in the membership of such local organizations depends upon local conditions, but many co-ops have found advantages in membership.

- c. Electric appliance, wiring, and allied businesses. Wiring and plumbing contractors, appliance dealers, and other businessmen can do a lot toward promoting acceptance of the electric cooperative in the community once they themselves are sold on the organization. The best ways to win their cooperation include fair and equal treatment for all dealers in the service area, listing of prospects, availability of Section 5 loans, provision of display space at meetings, and personal conversations to explain the organization and objectives of the REA co-op.
- d. County fair committees. REA co-ops should be regular exhibitors and should cooperate in every way possible.
- e. The clergy and the rural church. Inasmuch as rural ministers are the counsellors of their church members not only on spiritual matters but, in many cases, on other matters related to rural living, it is important that they understand the rural electric cooperatives completely in order that they may be able to speak accurately about them whenever the cooperatives are subject of conversations. It is desirable, also, that co-op officials avail themselves of the knowledge of the community which the local ministers have by reason of their contact with the people. Co-op officials should manifest an unbiased interest in local churches, in the work of the ministers, and assist wherever possible, because the co-op, like the church, is interested in the general welfare of the community it serves. The co-op must be alert to the

need for dealing with all church groups on an impartial basis.

f. Youth. Perhaps the largest group whose cooperation is desired is youth -- the boys and girls in the families of our members. This is peculiarly a case in which cooperation is a two-way street. Our cooperation with youth must begin now. Youth's cooperation with the rural electric cooperatives will come in fullest force, of course, in the years ahead when these boys and girls will be the owners of the co-ops and as such will have responsibility for their maintenance and proper conduct. These children are growing up in homes which have electricity and hence do not know by experience what their parents know about rural living in the oil-lamp and hand-pump days; they do not know the long unsuccessful effort of farmers to get electricity, nor how the cooperative plan brought electricity to them. All this should be fully explained to these young people, as should the fact of their parents' steadily increasing equity in the property and business, and the value to all electricity users of the competition provided by the co-ops in a field which otherwise would be in the hands of a monopoly.

It is suggested that every cooperative plan, in its own way, to get such information to the sons and daughters of members, that they report their methods and successes in this, and that other cooperatives study these reports and avail themselves of the fruits of such experience.

Many co-ops are introducing 4-H Clubs, Future Farmers of America, and other youth organizations to rural electrification and to cooperation by inviting groups to participate in annual meeting programs, to tour co-op facilities, to sit in on board meetings, and to compete in contests sponsored by the co-op.

g. Schools and P-T A. It has been recognized that cooperation and rural electrifica-

tion should be taught in the public schools. The co-ops should aid Parent-Teacher Association groups within their service area in every possible way. They should also work closely with school superintendents, principals and teachers whose concern it is to prepare rural youth to become effective rural citizens.

- h. Women's clubs. As a part of the broad objective of securing more active participation of women in the co-op's affairs as well as part of the community relations program, co-op leaders should offer support and fullest cooperation to the various women's organizations. Some of these groups may be willing to jointly sponsor cooking or other appliance demonstrations of electricity, or to take part in the program of the annual meeting.
- i. Farmers' organizations and other cooperatives. Conference participants suggested that the electric co-ops consider the advisability of the formation of county councils for better understanding and cooperation on all projects for improving agriculture and rural living.
- j. Organized labor. In order to continue to enjoy the good will and cooperation of labor groups, co-op representatives at the Conference urged that representatives of labor be invited to meetings for discussions of mutual problems. They recommended also that the rural electric cooperatives, themselves, conduct wage studies on a local and statewide basis to determine prevailing wages which should be paid.
- k. Legislators (national, state, and county). These should be kept informed; they should be invited to attend and participate in meetings and should receive the rural electric cooperatives' statewide papers and other publications.
- l. Government agencies. Full advantage should be taken at the local level of assistance which can be obtained from

REA and the other federal and state agencies.

39. Special attention needs be given to developing good relations with local press and radio people:

a. Subscribe to every publication in the service area; the electrification adviser should take out the subscriptions in person on behalf of the co-op. Use the occasion to explain what the co-op is and how it helps the community.

b. Plan a series of paid advertisements in local papers, quarterly or more often. The total expenditure for this need not and should not be large to be effective in telling the co-op's story.

c. Find and submit news and feature stories on rural electrification and the local co-op's activities for publication in local papers, in publications of farm organizations, and for local news broadcasts.

d. Express appreciation for all favorable publicity.

40. Invite community leaders who are members to work on committees; invite those who are not members to co-op meetings as speakers, giving them at the same time useful background information about the co-op. Visit annual meetings of other co-ops and invite their leaders to return the visits.

41. Stress the home-ownership and local-control aspects of the co-op.

IV. QUOTABLE QUOTES FROM THE CONFERENCE



" Rural electrification is changing the entire agricultural pattern. It is bringing about a greater diversification of farming. It is boosting farm income and has been a shot-in-the-arm to rural industries...Electricity is contributing greatly to a sound farm economy, which is the foundation of a sound national economy."

---KNOX T. HUTCHINSON, Assistant
Secretary of Agriculture

" The farmer's co-op electricity is important equipment for his farm. Like his other tools and machines, electricity must be fully used to spread overhead costs thinner and to get the best use out of it as an investment. It is a unique tool because it never wears out by being used."

---OBED WYUM, *President, North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives*

" There is more to the credit of co-op power than creating easier farm life; you can make more money by using electricity."

---ED. H. THOMAS, *Editor, Arkansas REA News*

" I know you are all concerned with showing co-op members how their electricity can be used more efficiently as a substitute for the manpower shortage which farmers will feel increasingly as the military needs are increased."

---CLAUDE R. WICKARD, *Administrator, REA*

" The quicker those already on the lines learn to make efficient use of the available power, the easier it becomes for a co-op to provide full area coverage without endangering its payout status."

---CLAUDE R. WICKARD, *Administrator, REA*

" At the very time when farmers may be expected to need more electricity as a substitute for farm labor, shortages of electrical equipment are quite likely to prevail. Such a development appears probable as more and more raw materials are siphoned away from civilian use and into defense production.

" Under these circumstances, it is obvious that farmers will have to use their present appliances and equipment as efficiently as possible. This means that farmers will have to take the best possible care of such equipment. Moreover, to get the most out of the equipment, it will have to be used for the jobs for which it is best suited."

---CLAUDE R. WICKARD, *Administrator, REA*

" If power use information is important in normal times, it is doubly so today when the outlook is so uncertain."

---CLAUDE R. WICKARD, *Administrator, REA*

" Every Electrification Adviser would do his or her country and the rural people a big favor if he or she would make every member aware of the absolute necessity of preserving our right and freedom to generate our own power when it is to our advantage."

---CLYDE T. ELLIS, *Executive Manager,
National Rural Electric Cooperative
Association*

" When we think of power use education, we must think and act in terms of benefit to the member rather than primarily in terms of increasing the sale of electricity."

----CLAUDE R. WICKARD, *Administrator,
REA*

" All a cooperative really is a group of people who have a common need. These people don't want to make money out of each other but are willing to work together for the benefit of the whole group."

---JERRY VOORHIS, *Executive Secretary,
The Cooperative League of the U.S.A.*

" To insure continued farmer ownership of rural electric facilities, co-op management must: (1) develop awareness of ownership and pride of ownership among individual members of the co-op, and (2) bring all members to participate actively and intelligently in the affairs of the co-op."

---GEORGE W. HAGGARD, *Deputy
Administrator, REA*

" The longer we postpone or neglect the educational program the more difficult the job becomes and the more costly the damages resulting from wrong impressions, misinformation and improper decisions."

---CLAUDE R. WICKARD, *Administrator,
REA*

" Members need repeated exposure to co-op education. Some will rub off onto them at each exposure."

---UNIDENTIFIED

" Directors and managers who have confidence in the members find that the members have confidence in them."

---L. T. MOSS, *Manager, Northeast
Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Inc.*

" It is the job of the electrification adviser to help members keep up on the co-op and how to use electricity effectively. If we are not up on a thing, we get down on it."

---*HOMER A. HILL, Editor,
Rural Electric Missourian*

" The difference between the strong electrification adviser program in your co-op and the absence of it might well mean the difference between sell-out and no sell-out."

---*CLYDE T. ELLIS, Executive Manager,
National Rural Electric Cooperative*

" Without members there would be no cooperative, no electric lines, no power on the farm for most of you."

---*JERRY VOORHIS, Executive Secretary,
The Cooperative League of the U.S.A.*

" The farm people of America own a thousand electric systems--going businesses--worth on the average more than two million dollars apiece...This decentralized local ownership is a bulwark against both monopoly and communism; these co-ops are a vital force for progress and the best insurance that American farmers have."

---*GEORGE W. HAGGARD, Deputy
Administrator, REA*

" I think a successful public relations program for any co-op can be based on this: To have good neighbors and friends, be good neighbors and friends."

---*T. H. HAVER, Chairman, State
Power Use and Member Education
Committee, Association of Illinois
Electric Co-ops*

" Cooperation is a two-way street...it is fundamental that the rural electric cooperatives earn desired cooperation from other groups in the community by cooperating in all practical ways with these groups."

---*W. P. McGUIRE, Editor,
Rural Virginia*

" A-1 service is a prerequisite to good public relations. You can't build good relations in the dark."

---*WILLIAM M. ROBERTS, Chairman,
State Power Use and Member
Education Committee, Tennessee
Rural Electric Cooperative
Association*

"The REA program has been developed in full accord with the principles of free enterprise and the private ownership of property. I have never been able to understand why it is any more socialistic for a group of farmers to own a distribution line or a generating plant than it is for a group of New York stockholders to own the same facilities."

---*GEORGE W. HAGGARD, Deputy Administrator, REA*

"Each co-op employee, from the front office to the most remote lineman, can be a one-man public relations representative for the co-op."

---*WILLIAM M. ROBERTS, Chairman, State Power Use and Member Education Committee, Tennessee Rural Electric Cooperative Association*

"The payment of prevailing wages is very important. When I became a co-op manager one of the first questions put to me by a relative of mine was, 'How much are your wages under those paid by competing private utilities?'"

---*T. H. HAVER, Chairman, State Power Use and Member Education Committee, Association of Illinois Electric Co-ops*

"Every manager, every director faces the question, 'How can we make people understand that the objective of the co-op is service to the people, not increased prestige of a few individuals connected with the co-op?'"

---*CLAUDE R. WICKARD, Administrator, REA*

"There are two good reasons why the power companies would like to acquire the rural electric cooperatives: (1) These rural electric systems are much more successful financially than anybody in the industry ever thought they could or would be; and (2) monopoly traditionally hates competition, even in those areas which the big commercial companies refused to serve."

---*GEORGE W. HAGGARD, Deputy Administrator, REA*

"In our own country, thank God, there is still freedom. It is not an abstract idea. It is a practice--a way of living together. True freedom comes only to people who are willing to take the risk and trouble to solve their own problems by their own efforts and to grow in strength in the process. True freedom includes the right of people to conduct profit business or nonprofit business as they see fit--and without discriminatory penalty in either case."

---*JERRY VOORHIS, Executive Secretary, The Cooperative League of the U.S.A.*



V. CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Resolved, that in the interest of national defense and the continuous and increased production of food and fiber, we strongly urge that the power use program be strengthened and enlarged throughout rural America by each group employing a full-time, capable electrification adviser to concentrate on expanding and improving methods of production through the efficient and economic use of electricity. (Presented in report of Statewide Managers.)
2. It is the view of this group that the development of a formal member education program with at least one qualified, full-time employee should be recommended as a "must" for all co-ops if they are to survive. (Presented in reports of Working Groups 1, 2, and 3.)
3. We recommend a program of director's clinics (which could be sponsored by statewide associations, or by one or more co-ops in states which have no statewide organizations). We also recommend more conferences such as the present one, to include managers and directors, and to be held on a national and state basis. (Presented in report of Working Group 2.)
4. We recommend a centralized training school for basic training of electrification advisers by REA (at co-op expense) at least once a year (two weeks' minimum) and preferably twice. School to be conducted by REA specialists and would supplement present schools. (Presented in report of Working Group 2.)
5. We should resolve that more women be

named to serve on statewide power use and member education committees and in other positions where they can participate more actively in the co-ops, especially in the field of education. (Presented by Mrs. Aldes Mott, Ohio, in general session.)

6. The group recommends that success stories of how electrification advisers have helped members to realize greater production or other benefits through the use of co-op power be written and placed in the Rural Electrification Magazine, in the Rural Electrification News, in farm journals, in co-op statewide publications and local newsletters, and that such stories be presented widely at co-op meetings, local, statewide, and national. (Presented in reports of Co-op Directors and Managers and of Co-op Editors.)
7. Since loans from REA are based on a definite expectation of KWH consumption, and since some board members and managers are not familiar with details of the feasibility study prepared by REA on each loan, and since, therefore, they do not realize the full importance of securing steady

power consumption as contrasted to short periods of high peak load, this group recommends that REA send out representatives to explain fully the details of the feasibility study following the announcement of loan approval. (Presented in report of Working Group 1.)

8. REA should furnish all co-ops with up-to-date information on educational aids and use direct mailing to electrification advisers (in addition to managers) to insure full use of these materials. (Presented in reports of Working Groups 1 and 2.)
9. Resolved, that REA be asked to prepare and distribute to all directors and managers of local co-ops as full and complete a report as possible on the educational material developed at this Conference, together with a letter from Administrator Wickard asking that the co-op board record in its minutes whatever action it takes on power use, co-op education, and community relations suggestions reported from this Conference. (Presented in reports of Working Group 2, Statewide Managers, and Co-op Editors.)

